

**CONSERVATION LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS SELECTION SYSTEM**  
**Massachusetts Self-Help Program & Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund**

In order to distribute limited grant funds, a project selection system has been developed for conservation land acquisition projects. The selection system includes an interagency review of each project and the draft ratings and funding recommendations. For Fiscal Year 2008 projects, the Sustainable Development Criteria issued by the Office of Commonwealth Development will be utilized. Communities may use scores from Fiscal Year 2006 or submit a new Commonwealth Capital application. The rating system considers demographic, social, and project quality factors in order to identify those projects which best protect both natural resources and public passive outdoor recreation opportunities.

**Interagency Review**

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' Interagency Lands Committee (ILC) reviews conservation land acquisition project applications to ensure project coordination with state agency programs, executive orders and environmentally sound land use policies. The Committee consists of representatives from the Departments of Conservation and Recreation, Fish and Game, and Agricultural Resources, and EOEEA personnel. The ILC considers each project and its impact on the statewide conservation vision articulated in *The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP). DCS coordinates the interagency review of all applications and submits all comments and recommendations to the Secretary of Environmental Affairs for final funding decisions.

In reviewing applications and developing their recommendations to the Director of Conservation Services, the ILC considers:

**1. Demographics**

Three categories are evaluated by DCS to calculate a community's demographic score. Communities with higher Population Density, lower Median Income, and higher Percentage of Households Below Poverty Level receive higher demographic scores. Environmental Justice Community – calculated by EOEEA's Environmental Justice Director.

Scores are calculated by DCS; therefore, there is no need to submit any statistics or narrative on your community's behalf.

**2. Community Planning Score**

- Smart Growth Score – EOEEA encourages land use decisions that protect environmental quality and preserve natural resources. Unplanned growth not only threatens the environment, it also can adversely affect the timely provision of needed infrastructure and has a tremendous fiscal impact on communities. This impact, in turn, puts future economic opportunities at risk. Please submit your community's FY06 Commonwealth Capital score, available online at [www.mass.gov/ocd/comcap.html](http://www.mass.gov/ocd/comcap.html), to obtain your score. Please direct any questions that you may have to (617) 626-4949.
- Smart Conservation – has your community passed the Community Preservation Act, or is it currently on the ballot?
- Is your project mentioned in your current municipal Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Is your project part of an Affordable Housing project?

**3. Project Quality**

- Water Resources: frontage on the ocean or estuarine habitats; frontage on lakes, ponds, rivers; recreational utility, and protection of drinking water supplies;
- Green Infrastructure: size of the acquisition and its proximity to other protected open space;
- Multiple Uses: purpose for acquisition, in addition to public passive recreation;
- Biodiversity and Resource Protection: subject property contains resources identified by The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species program, Massachusetts Historical Commission, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. Applicants must include written comments from any of the following state agencies: the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program Office, or the Massachusetts Historical Commission, or ACEC program as appropriate.
- Consistency with local Open Space and Recreation Plan and SCORP.

**4. Partnerships**

EOEEA, like any other open space protection agency or organization, must have other financial partners. Projects that involve financial contribution from more than one municipality, or from a nonprofit organization will be given higher consideration. Projects that obtain technical assistance from other organizations will also benefit in the rating system.

**SELECTION NOTES:**

**Preservation of Agricultural Land**

Executive Order #193 discourages the irreversible conversion of the Commonwealth's productive agricultural land base. State Grants shall not be used to encourage the irreversible conversion of agricultural land to other uses when feasible alternatives are available. In the event that all feasible alternatives have been explored, and the conversion of suitable agricultural lands to non-agricultural use remains the only feasible alternative to protection of open space, a mitigation plan must be developed to be eligible for reimbursement under a state grant. Project which would convert any prime agricultural lands should consult with the Department Agricultural Resources at (617) 626-1700 prior to submitting an application.

**Land and Water Conservation Fund Policy and Criteria for Selection of Projects**

Note that federal funds are also made available to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game. These state agencies therefore also compete with municipalities for federal funding. All state agency projects will be rated and ranked using the Land and Water Conservation Fund Rating Sheet (attached). Municipal projects not ranking high enough for available state funding for Self-Help and Urban Self-Help will be evaluated using the Land and Water Conservation Fund Rating System, along with the state projects. The highest ranking projects will be funded with available federal funds.

# **RATING SYSTEM for Self-Help Conservation Acquisition Projects**

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	Description	Partial Points	Max	
DEMOGRAPHICS	Population Density	Figures obtained from MISER and put into rank order by DCS	1 through 4	5	
	Median Income	Figures obtained from MISER and put into rank order by DCS	1 through 4	5	
	Percentage of Households below Poverty Level	Figures obtained from MISER and put into rank order by DCS	1 through 4	5	
	Environmental Justice Community	Calculated by EOEEA's Environmental Justice Director	1 through 4	5	
COMMUNITY PLANNING SCORE	Sustainable Development Criteria - Smart Growth Score	FY06 Commonwealth Capital application score should be used (see <a href="http://www.mass.gov/ocd/comcap.html">http://www.mass.gov/ocd/comcap.html</a> for details). If your community has not yet applied for a Comm Cap score, complete an application on or before July 31, 2007 to be eligible for points under this category.	1-29	30	
	Affordable Housing	Component of Affordable Housing Project		2	
	Consistency with SCORP	Points awarded based project's priority in the local Open Space and Recreation Plan, and <i>SCORP Chapter 5: The Regional Perspective</i> , "Inferred Need for New Recreational Areas" <a href="http://www.mass.gov/envir/dcs/global/publications.htm">http://www.mass.gov/envir/dcs/global/publications.htm</a> .	1-3	4	
PROJECT QUALITY	Water Resources	Frontage on ocean, or estuarine habitat.	15	15	
		Lake, pond, major river, water supply (surface or ground) i.e. Zone II or reservoir, cold water fishery stream	10		
		Secondary river or stream with recreation potential, frontage on small streams, small wetlands	5		
	Green Infrastructure	100+ acres of upland forest, wetland or water resources that create a hub or corridor of permanently protected land; expansion of existing hub or corridor (including those protected by APR or CR)	15	15	
		Acquisitions of between 50 - 100 acres that 1.) link to other Article 97 lands or 2.) are within a Critical Ecosystem (MNHESP)	10 points		
		Acquisitions of less than 50 acres that 1.) link to other Article 97 lands or 2.) are within a Critical Ecosystem (MNHESP)	5 points		
	Multiple Uses	Water Supply Protection	Wildlife Habitat	4+ uses 4 pts	4
		Agricultural Use	Forest Management	3 uses - 3 pts	
		Passive Recreation	Environmental Education	2 uses - 2 pts	
		Historic or Archeological Interpretation		1 use - 0 pts	
	Biodiversity and Resource Protection	Project contains resources identified by the: * Statewide Land Conservation Plan * MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program * Massachusetts Historical Commission * Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Program * Living Waters ( <a href="http://www.mass.gov/envir/water/publications.htm">http://www.mass.gov/envir/water/publications.htm</a> )	4	4	
		Project abuts identified resource area, or is likely to contain resources identified by the: * Statewide Land Conservation Plan * MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program * Massachusetts Historical Commission * Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Program * Living Waters ( <a href="http://www.mass.gov/envir/water/publications.htm">http://www.mass.gov/envir/water/publications.htm</a> )	2		
PARTNERSHIPS	Cooperative Effort between Municipality and one or more Partner(s)	Other Sources of Funding from another Municipality or Nonprofit Organization	4	4	
		Management Plan: Technical Assistance and Signature on plan	2	2	
TOTAL				100	

## Land and Water Conservation Fund Policy and Criteria for Selection of Projects

Overview: The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is authorized by federal legislation to fund conservation land acquisition and park improvement projects for states and municipalities. Funding comes from offshore oil leases, and is appropriated annually. EOEEA is the approved liaison agency that works with the National Park Service (NPS) to recommend projects for funding. Since 1965, Massachusetts has received \$95 million. LWCF is a reimbursement program and includes important federal approvals should land involved in a LWCF project ever be threatened with a change from conservation or recreational uses.

1. The Secretary of EOEEA, as the State Liaison Officer for the Land and Water Conservation Fund duly appointed by the Governor in accordance with the LWCF program, will authorize the submittal of applications to NPS for available LWCF funds in order to select the best projects and keep unspent balances in this account low.
2. The Director of Conservation Services will rate eligible state and municipal conservation and recreation projects using the rating system below and recommend projects for the Secretary to submit to NPS. State agency applications and any municipal application seeking LWCF funds will be rated and ranked using the Land and Water Conservation Fund Rating Sheet (below). EOEEA reserves the right to fund a municipal project from the program source it deems most appropriate and most beneficial to the overall needs of the Secretariat.

### LWCF Rating System

<i>Recreation Project Criteria</i>	<i>Recreation Projects Points</i>	<i>Conservation Project Criteria</i>	<i>Conservation Projects Points</i>
Need for this type of park within municipality and neighborhood	35	Statewide resource quality and use for passive recreation	35
Impact of LWCF funding on viability of this park	15	Impact of LWCF funding on viability of this parcel for conservation land	15
Importance in meeting goals of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)	15	Importance in meeting goals of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)	15
Ability of applicant to maintain the park into the future.	10	Ability of the applicant to maintain the conservation land into the future.	10
Ability of the project to provide health and education benefits in the future	5	Ability of the project to provide health and education benefits in the future	5
Likelihood of competing future uses for the land and importance of LWCF status in protecting land from future conversions from park use	20	Likelihood of competing future uses for the land and importance of LWCF status in protecting land from future conversions from conservation use.	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>